

Our readings today point to true freedom

True wisdom

And how these help us to understand the Law

What this is

And what it isn't

As products of a modern society based on law

We see laws as an infringement on freedom

That is because we see freedom not as true freedom

But as license to do as we please

And because when this is your worldview

To enforce the law, we need courts and policemen

And so it is natural to look on God as this big enforcer in the sky

He gave us these commandments

These laws to live by

To infringe on our license to do as we please

And he is like a soldier or cop

Waiting to trap us and trip us up

So he can hammer us with his punishment

But that is not how God designed things

It is not how He desires them to be

Sirach shows us true freedom in God

Sirach is part of Wisdom literature in the Old Testament

The Wisdom tradition presumes an order to the world

That there are consequences to our choices and actions

It does not teach predestination

But rather freedom

Men and women can discover how the world works

And can choose to live lives in conformity to that

Or we can choose to disregard this order

We can try to impose our will upon the natural order

The results of these choices is seen in this reading from Sirach

Fire and water

Good and evil

Life and death

Polar opposites

And rarely any middle ground

This is really nothing new

Wasn't this at the core of Adam and Eve's choice?

The tree of life and the tree of knowledge

God has given them everything

Placed them in the Garden of Eden

God, who is all good, all wise, all knowing

Most important; all loving and all merciful

Everything in the garden was for their good

Except the one tree in the center

Satan comes disguised as a serpent

In Genesis we read:

Of all the beasts which the Lord had made

There was none that could match the serpent in cunning

So Satan doesn't show himself for what he truly is

A beast totally separated from God

The father of lies

**He wants Adam and Eve to think it is he that has their best
interest at heart**

Not God, who created them and gave them everything

And in their gullibility they listened to Satan

And took from the fruit that was forbidden

They wanted their plan, not God's

They wanted control

They wanted to define what beauty contained

They wanted utopia

A perfect world in their eyes

They made a choice

And we have the consequences

They chose fire

And got burned

They chose evil

And evil continues to touch our lives

They chose death

And death reigns

And so often we follow them every day

Not directing our attention to our loving, merciful God

But putting our trust in human wisdom

Thinking we can build a perfect world with no suffering

We can cure every disease

No natural disasters

If we can only control the climate

No terrorist attacks

If everyone would agree to put their God aside

And conform to the god of the powerful

God gives us the freedom to make our choices

But we need to seek His wisdom to choose wisely

As St Paul puts it

We need a wisdom not of this age

Nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away

We need God's wisdom

A mysterious and hidden wisdom

A wisdom God has predetermined before the ages for our glory

What eye has not seen

And ear has not heard

It has not entered the human heart

What God has prepared for those that love him

This is God's wisdom

A wisdom that makes sense of the Beatitudes

A wisdom that makes sense out of a fallen world

A wisdom that can make sense even out of a cross and crucifixion

It is a wisdom that does not reject the law

But fulfills it in its entirety

The smallest part of the letter will be fulfilled

While the law bans murder

Jesus condemns rash judgment and slander

The law prohibits the act of adultery

Jesus condemns impure thoughts and lustful desire

The wisdom of God does not look at words written in stone

But at the word written on human hearts

He looks beyond the external actions

To the intention of the heart

He knows how desperately we need God in our lives

Because God alone has the power to transform our hearts

This wisdom speaks to our hearts

And it speaks to the world

To paraphrase the words of Blessed Fulton J Sheen

The world continues to crucify God and the Church

**The world asks the Church and us to give up our belief in the
spiritual destiny of man**

That we are made in the image and likeness of God

**Give up your belief in the sanctity of marriage between one man and
one woman**

Give up your belief that there is objective truth

In your belief that the Church hold the fullness of truth

For the world, to believe in anything is better than believing the truth

The world calls us to give up our belief in the existence of God

And in the divinity of Christ

The world decries suffering

**That suffering can purchase salvation is a foreign language to the
world**

That to lose our life is how we save our life is a foreign language

The tempered enjoyment of this world is a foreign language

But it is God's wisdom that says no

The miracle is to have the freedom to change these teachings

And the courage and fortitude to say no

There is truth

There is beauty

There is good

And these do not come from human wisdom or government decree

And although it is easier to be a Gnostic or Arian

To be an agnostic or atheist

It is easier to let the current age run wild and free

Than to stand firm

Because when we stand firm

We are standing in the shadow of the cross

A cross that stands between heaven and earth

A cross that only makes sense in the wisdom of God

A cross we can only embrace in true freedom